



County of San Diego

Department of Environmental Health

Land and Water Quality Division

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DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR ONSITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS IN THE AREA FORMALLY KNOWN AS THE CITRUS AVENUE SEPTIC SYSTEM MORATORIUM

Overview

The Board of Supervisors adopted the Citrus Avenue Septic System Moratorium in 1982 to prohibit construction of new septic systems in this unincorporated area near southeastern Escondido. This moratorium was established in response to numerous septic system failures that occurred between 1978 and 1982 as a result of above average rainfall and rising groundwater levels. The concern was the potential for increasing the rate and degree of septic system failures with continued development within the watershed basin. (Refer to Figure 1)

In June of 2002, the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) completed a hydrological study of the Citrus Avenue Watershed and the area defined as the Citrus Avenue Moratorium. The study recommended lifting the Citrus Avenue Moratorium and evaluating proposed development using a strict groundwater separation policy for the design of onsite sewage disposal systems.

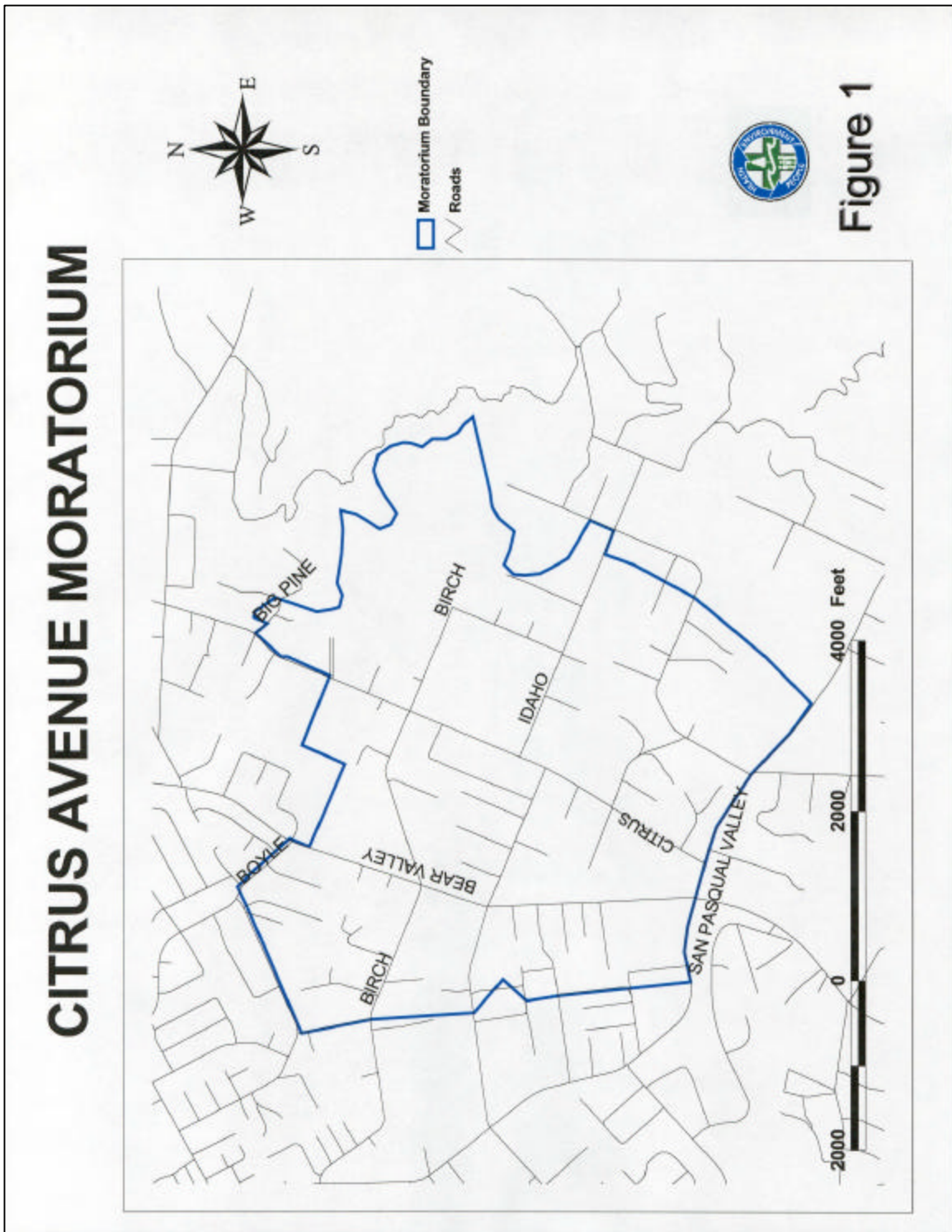
On September 6, 2003 the lifting of the Citrus Avenue Septic System Moratorium was adopted as County Ordinance. Included in the ordinance changes is the provision to allow the use of alternative onsite sewage disposal systems for existing legal lots, as is provided for the Valley Center watershed basin, formally referred to as, the Valley Center Moratorium

Design Requirements

Any onsite sewage disposal system proposed for new construction or to add additions to an existing building within the area formerly known as the Citrus Avenue Moratorium will require a five-foot separation between the bottom of the disposal system to the historic high level of groundwater on the site. Historic high groundwater levels will be considered as the level that the watershed basins exhibit with full recharge.

Any proposed subdivision within this area with the proposed use of onsite sewage disposal systems will also require a full hydrological study to demonstrate whether or not the development will cause groundwater mounding that would affect proposed onsite development and adjacent developed parcels.

(Figure 1 – 1982 Citrus Avenue Moratorium Boundaries)



Additional Design Requirements

- Senior DEH staff, the DEH Senior Hydrogeologist, and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board will review all design proposals prior to recommendation for approval
- It is expected that continued groundwater monitoring on most sites will be required to determine the depth to historic high groundwater levels as a function of full watershed basin recharge.
- The use of alternative onsite sewage disposal systems will be considered on a case-by-case basis for existing, legal lots only. These systems must be based on proven technology with documented reliability over a 5-year period within the State of California, or have approved design criteria with DEH. Experimental systems will not be considered.

Conventional Onsite Sewage Disposal System Designs

All conventional onsite sewage disposal system designs in San Diego will require at least 5 feet of unsaturated soil between the bottom of the sewage disposal system and the highest anticipated ground water level for the site. Depth to groundwater varies tremendously with the amount of rainfall for many areas in San Diego County. Therefore, the highest anticipated groundwater levels must be established for any system design in order to meet this separation requirement. Details are provided in the County's "On-site Wastewater System Groundwater Policy", available on the DEH web site.

At sites affected by a shallow impervious layer of rock or clay, a minimum five-foot unsaturated soil interval is required between the bottom of the disposal system and the shallowest impervious layer.

Percolation testing will be required for any site proposing horizontal seepage pits, or that do not have Health Department Certification for septic system sizing requirements.

Any approved septic tank connected to the following

- Leach Lines
- Horizontal Seepage Pit
- DEH Approved Plastic Chambers
- Approved Pump Chamber + Leach Lines, Horizontal Seepage Pit, or Approved Plastic Chambers

Alternative Onsite Sewage Disposal System Designs

Currently the only alternative system that has approved design criteria in San Diego County with this Department and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board is the mound system.

- As previously stated, these will be considered only for existing, legal parcels.
- An annual maintenance permit will be required once the installation of the system has been completed.
- Depth to historic groundwater levels must have a 5-foot separation from the bottom of the mound system. This would be no shallower than 4 feet below the ground surface.